

Japan Christian Activity News

PUBLISHED

BY NCC J

Editor:

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ISSN: 0021-4353

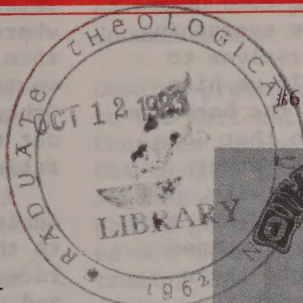
#601 September, 1983

JESUS CHRIST, LIFE OF THE WORLD

As a woman delegate of the United Church of Christ in Japan at the Sixth Assembly in Vancouver, Canada (July 24-Aug. 10, 1983), I had the privilege of participating in the decision-making process for the coming seven years of the World Council of Churches. Even though we were three hours behind schedule, it was an exciting moment for the 900 delegates of whom 248 were women from 301 member churches when we concluded the three-week meeting by finalizing our convictions in proclaiming the good news that "Jesus Christ is the Life of the World" and by "renewing our commitment to Just and peace."

What the Kingdom Is All About

The highlight of the Assembly was the strengthening of the understanding of peace and justice. Peace was no longer business, but was clearly demonstrated through the visible unity of the church. As Marie Assaad, an Egyptian Orthodox stated, "We are different, but there was no division." People of various traditions worshipped and worked together using many languages. The community of faith was bound together with enthusiasm, particularly when 5,000 celebrated two hours of Eucharistic fellowship--"The Feast of Life" using the liturgy worked out and affirmed by the WCC Faith and Order Commission at Lima, Peru in January, 1982. Unity was experienced in this. "At last, praise God," said Lois Wilson of Canada, "we can accept together the bread and wine, the body and blood, without those dreadful hangups we've had for so long."



Women Played Important Roles

Lifting up the enthusiasm of the Assembly was Pauline Webb from Britain, who gave the sermon at the opening worship service attended by 15,000 people. She was willing to face world issues positively and emphasized "the shedding of blood as a symbol of creation and life against the bloodletting fanaticism of our time." She did not hesitate to say that "for a woman, it is a sign that her body is being prepared to give birth if and when life is conceived within her. Even those who do not know motherhood have instincts and energies that can be used by God in sustaining and nourishing His children." As a gift of life, an African woman presented her baby as a symbolic act at the opening worship filling everyone's heart with joy and love.

In the plenaries, cluster meetings, issue and small group discussions,

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some people were well-known and others less-known, but all witnessed powerfully from their own situations. Dorothee Soelle, a German, said in the plenary, "Fullness of life does not come when you already have everything. We first have to empty ourselves to receive God's fullness. If we hide ourselves from God behind the barriers of our many possessions so that God cannot touch us, we die." Mother Euprasia, Romania, followed with, "People today are secularized and they have been away from prayers because they are afraid to look into their inner lives. Prayer restores the human spirit to a state of fellowship and love."

No Peace Without Justice

While peace and justice were discussed abstractly, Domitila Barrios, a labor organizer in the Bolivia tin mines, stressed specific examples of the inhumane situation of workers and stressed the fear of a bloodbath in her country. Darlene Keju-Johnson of the Marshall Islands, made an appeal about the crisis her people face today in a country where there is no equivalent for the word "enemy." She said the worst condition from the effects of 66 nuclear bomb tests at Bikini and Enewetak in the Marshalls is "jelly-fish babies, which breathe and move up and down, but are not shaped like human beings. They look like bags of jelly."

More issues were presented by the Pacific people in the threat of a new form of colonialism - transnational corporations which dominate tourism and resource development - in an area which still has two actual colonies, the French territory of New Caledonia and the U.S. territory of Micronesia. The Nuclear-Free Pacific movement was emphasized in the protest against the dumping of radioactive wastes in the Pacific Ocean.

Helen Caldicott, an Australian physician, commented on the very real threat of the world arms race and modern military technology with the illustration of saving "an archetypal wisdom in the eyes of a baby." She vowed

that, "No one will kill my kids. my dead body, they are going to live until they're 92 and die of natural causes." Aruna Granadson from India interjected, "I come from a country where babies die like flies. None of them live to be 92; just like animals, we too are killing each other for food." Other Asian representatives pointed out the destructive forces of militarization against peace.

Abdisi Sownmi, a Nigerian woman, spoke to the 'discrimination on the basis of race, color, or birth and the unjust and unjustifiable acquisition of wealth by a few at the expense of the many.'

WCC Statement on Peace and Justice

Sharp debate on peace and justice continued, centering on whether there should be a call for unilateral disarmament with justice or a more restrained statement. Avery Post of the U.S. and Henry Okullu of Kenya insisted that "Peace and injustice cannot coexist." Post said, "It is urgent. It is declarative. Peace and justice should be a more imperative statement in the prophetic tradition." Bishop Habgood of the Church of England took a different view saying that it should be much more respectful of the various conditions in our various countries and various churches. The Assembly should be careful not to generate a mood of panic." Okullu then said, "There will be no peace while millions in Africa die of hunger and millions in the North die of overeating." The statement "Struggle for Justice and Human Dignity" points out that "without justice for all everywhere, we shall never have peace anywhere."

Allan Boesak from South Africa stated, "The struggle for peace and the struggle for justice are inseparable." Aruna Granadson took this one step further. "Women know, out of our own lives, that relationships can be healed between two people if one person takes the first step. This is also true between nations. Churches must advocate first steps towards reconciliation and disarmament."

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WCC moderator, Archbishop Edward Scott's statement in the opening plenary was fully supported, that is, that "the two current ideologies - those of Communism and Capitalism - may well be bankrupted." He said, "While each of the competing materialistic systems has achieved the 'almost incredible,' neither can any longer satisfy the deepest human aspirations. Christians have largely accommodated themselves to the cultural values these two philosophies enshrine, rather than having critiqued them from their own faith affirmations. But Vancouver's life-affirming theme presents a demanding evangelism - one that neither leaders of the WCC nor its member churches dare escape."

Enthusiasm and passion for peacemaking guided spirited discussions throughout the Assembly. It is now our task to transmit that exciting experience of the Assembly to the Christian community in Japan by proclaiming the Gospel and making acts of healing in this divided world.

- Aiko Carter

JAPANESE CHURCH LEADERS ADVISE U.S. EMBASSY CONCERNING REAGAN YASUKUNI VISIT

In light of a newspaper report (August 12 in the Asahi Shinbun) pressure is being applied to have President Reagan go to the Yasukuni Shrine for sampai-worship when he visits Japan in November this year. Because of the serious issues involved if such a trip to the Yasukuni Shrine should take place, three Japanese church leaders visited the U.S. Embassy on September 14 to present letters and express concern from their churches and organizations. Mr. OOSHI-MA Koitchi, Chairperson of the National Christian Council of Japan's Yasukuni Issues Committee, General Secretary NAKAJIMA Masaaki of the United Church of Christ in Japan, and MURAKAMI Mitsunobu of the Japan Baptist Convention met with Mark T. FITZPATRICK of the Political Section of the U.S. Embassy.

Each church leader presented official statements from their own organization expressed verbal concerns, and presented newspaper clippings and other documentation.

Ooshima presented a letter that went to the National Council of Christian Churches in the USA asking the NCCC-USA to help President Reagan realize some of the issues involved if he should go to the Shrine. It was pointed out that such a visit would be intruding into the internal affairs of Japan and, in effect, supporting a movement to circumvent a constitutional provision for the separation of religion and State. A copy of the letter was officially sent to President Reagan and to the U.S. Embassy.

General Secretary Nakajima's Sept. 12 letter was to President Reagan from USHIROKU Toshio, Moderator of the Kyodan and Mr. Nakajima. The letter included the following:

"The nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine would be a clearcut abrogation of the constitutionally guaranteed principle of the separation of religion and state, and would in effect mean the re-establishment of Shinto as the state religion of Japan.

"The frequent visits in recent years to Yasukuni Shrine by the Prime Minister and various cabinet members are nothing but the step-by-step realization of the nationalization of the Shrine. Accordingly, your visit to Yasukuni Shrine as President of the United States of America would probably lead to the virtual ipso facto settlement of this long-pending problem."

The letter to President Reagan delivered by Murakami was approved by the Executive Committee of the Japan Baptist Convention with copies to the Baptist World Alliance, officers of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the U.S. Ambassador. The letter said, in part;

"An appearance of the President of the US at this Shrine would be misinterpreted by the Japanese people as an

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act of Shinto worship. In 1978, the Yasukuni Shrine made a god of General Tojo and six other war leaders. By any standards of religion, ethics or logic one feels it would be the height of inconsistency for a president of the United States to perform such an act of worship."

Mr. Fitzgerald of the embassy explained the process by which decisions were being made for Reagan's itinerary and said that those planning the schedule were aware of the issues involved in going to the Yasukuni Shrine. He hesitated to agree with a statement that if Reagan did make such a visit it would be on the basis of a personal decision of the President. Mr. Fitzgerald expressed appreciation to the group, assured them that the information delivered and the opinions expressed by their respective organizations would be given serious consideration as Reagan's scheduled is planned.

- John Reagan

JAPANESE COMPANY INVOLVEMENT IN THAILAND: REPORT FROM A MISSIONARY

I have recently become interested in a small Christian village about 70 kilometers from Chiang Mai after participating in a work camp there. Payap College students and students from the International Christian College in Japan worked to help the villagers build their church. About 700 acres surrounding the village have been purchased by the Japanese-owned Pioneer Company. The company plants a special tree on the land and then uses the wood to make musical instruments in Japan. The people from this three-village cluster are left without land to grow rice which is their basic source of livelihood. The company hires about 50 persons from the villages but pays them only \$1.25 a day while minimum wage set by the Thai government is \$2.75 a day. This infraction goes unnoticed since the company is able to pay off the necessary government officials. The company also pays extra money to those village workers who serve as informers.

The people know they are exploited but are afraid to talk very much about their plight although a few villagers shared these details with me. Many are forced into illegal activities for survival such as cutting down trees on government restricted land for additional income.

While we were in the village, the Japanese land was set on fire and they lost about \$350,000. Two Christian men from the village were later arrested and accused to causing the fire. While I have reasons to believe they are innocent, one must certainly consider that some people in our world have little choice for survival except through measures of violence. Such conditions sadden me and cause me great distress in my Christian convictions of peace. While I may be pointing a finger at a Japanese company in these reflections, let me assure you that in Thailand there are many American companies which are functioning in similar ways. All foreign companies here that I have come upon have seemed to adapt to the political ways of this culture in order to make a profit and/or claim Thailand's natural resources. Meanwhile, the silent people at the village level (75% of the population) suffer. #

TAKING THE PROPHETS SERIOUSLY

Editor's Note:

The Japan NCC Women's Committee has been supporting Korean atomic bomb victims in cooperation with Korean Church Women United. Invited by the NCC committee Ms. Park Soobok, a journalist who has researched Korean nuclear bomb victim conditions, visited Japan with Rev. Lee Moonoo, General Secretary of Korean Church Women United.

It is said that there were about 100,000 Koreans who experienced the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombs with half of them being killed. It is estimated that about 30,000 of those Koreans who survived returned to their home land after World War II and about 8,000 stayed in Japan. Including second and third generation persons, about 60,000 nuclear

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bomb victims are living in South Korea today. The following is a summerized translation of Ms. Park's speech at the Japan Christian Center in Tokyo on Sept. 26, 1983.

I did not know anything about Korean nuclear bomb victims until 1962 when I became a TV producer. I started visiting A-bomb victims to hear their stories related to me in Japanese. I have never been in Hiroshima but I learned from them many details of the city. When I visited Kawasaki I cried in memory of a man whom I met in Korea who had been forcefully moved to Japan by the Japanese military to become a laborer in Hokkaido. He run away to Kawasaki and then to Hiroshima where he experienced the A-bombing. In forgotten places in Korea so many are suffering from the after-effects of the 1945 bombings. The only thing that I can do for them is to listen to stories of how they survived and endured their pain.

I met a 26 year old woman who was hospitalized as a leukemia patient but was later released as cured, because hospitals do not want to take care of bomb victims. I also met her father and other family members who are all A-bomb victims. I talked with an 83 year-old mother whose two sons were taken to Japan. The older son came home after the Hiroshima bombing and the younger one after Nagasaki. The older son died last June and the younger one died when he was 36 years old. The younger son fathered a child with an abnormally large head who at the same time cannot bend his legs.

Unless we take the peace movement seriously everything on earth will be destroyed. I believe the September 1st Korean Airlines incident is the beginning of the end in this nuclear age. Peace is necessary for life just as are drinking water and air. We must guard peace. The world is one and this tragedy is connected world-wide to all other tragedies. The momentum of the nuclear age is like a broken car racing downhill which cannot stop unless it crashes headlong into a wall.

I have decided to build a "Peace House" where people can come together and discuss peace, where people can listen to others and unite their creativity and power for peace, and where we can teach our children the importance of peace.

It is our responsibility to relate the truth about atom bomb victims who have to move from one bridge to another in order to find shelter underneath, and about those victims who wander into the mountains consuming edible grasses in order to survive. No country can live in isolation. We must expand our vision so that the peace movement informs our very living and breathing, and all our comings and goings.#

A CHURCH'S WITNESS IN THE DEVIL'S TOWN

According to Immigration statistics, 142,353 Japanese visited the Philippines in 1982 of whom 80.25% were men. This represents an 11.8% decrease from 1981. On the other hand, the number of visitors from the Philippines to Japan has quadrupled in the last ten years with 37,878 Filipinos visiting Japan in 1982 59.4% of them were women. Some came to Japan on a two-month entertainers visa and others on a 90-day tourist visa.

In the past five years, 1,889 foreigners were arrested because of illegal acts. The Japan Women's Temperance Union is organizing a shelter for such women who are running away from inhumane working conditions.

NISHIHARA Akira, a Kyodan pastor, wrote of his mission in downtown Osaka where he opens his Shimanouchi Church to the women working in his area.

Over the last four or five years I have seen young Filipinas in our area which some people call the Devil's Town. Some of the women say they are Catholic and ask for the location of the church. Others who visit me at the church promise to come back for the 2 o'clock service. I wait for them with English hymns but they do not show up. They work 12 hours a day (from 4 PM to 4 AM) (Continued on p.6)

and are especially busy on weekends. Sometimes I see Filipinas praying in the sanctuary. When they leave the church, I see the image of the woman who was forgiven by Jesus overlapping on their backs.

I also see women from Thailand and South Korea in this area. Last May two Korean women jumped from the fourth floor window of a Korean-style bar near the church and killed themselves. The women had been brought to this country illegally and chose death rather than be arrested. We economically advanced Japanese have brought women from Asia to be used as objects for our desire. How cruel we are! How helpless I am! I can't do anything for the women who work in these situations.

It's my wish to make the church a place where anybody can come and pray together. In order to deepen this fellowship, a coffeehouse in the church is open once a week. A citizen's group uses the church for telephone counseling services to prevent suicide. Gradually, people in the town have come to understand our work and whenever they need our help they visit us in church.

It's only done once a year, but the midnight Christmas program has continued. Five days before Christmas, I go around to every bar and shop in town and leave an invitation which says, "Please come to the church anytime after work and celebrate Christmas. A candlelight service is repeated continuously from 10 PM to 6 AM. Tea and coffee are also available."

Last Christmas, the 6AM service was attended by 16 young women. It was dark even with the candles. When we started to sing "Silent Night," they were singing in English. I alternate my Christmas message between English and Japanese. Although we waited for them all night, all the church members were so happy. We shared the joy of Christmas together. I thought they might be angels, a multitude of the heavenly host. As the shepherds said, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which

this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us," we too were able to see the living Christ vividly working in this area. They promised to come back again, but they were never able to come. Our wish is to have the Lord's blessing as Jesus said, "Truly I say, as you did this unto the least of these, so you have done unto me." #

(Translation taken from FUJIN SHINPO
9/1983.)

JIZO LAWSUIT AND JIZO WITH CROSS

Several years ago, Osaka city built two "jizo" (stone statues) on city housing property at the request of people in the area. In April of this year, two pastors of the Japan Holiness Church started legal action against the city on the grounds of Article 89 of the constitution (the prohibition of public money use for any religious institution) and Article 20 (freedom of religion).

The defendant says that the Jizo is not a religious object over and beyond the conventional usage.

Originally Jizo were not related to Buddhism, but rather one of gods representing the earth in an ancient Indian religion. This was then taken by Buddhism and became a guardian deity for children or for bringing profits and happiness to people.

These pastors may believe that Christianity is a pure religion while Buddhism or Shinto are secular containing inseparable elements of religion and usages. It is necessary for us to recognize ambiguity in Christianity as well. I believe that it is time for Christianity to evaluate itself through dialogue with other religions and find ways to relate to other religions.

Recently I visited Rev. YOSHIDA Kanji, Church of Christ in Japan, who studies Jizo carrying the cross on the back of the statues. Several of these were discovered in Kasai, Hyogo prefecture. They were standing in a deep mountain graveyard. It was written that they

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were built in 1742, over 100 years after the prohibition of Christianity in Japan. Rev. Yoshida interprets this to mean that in the Hyogo area the oppression of Christians was less severe than in other places such as Nagasaki and that the believers continued to keep their faith in various ceremonial ways.

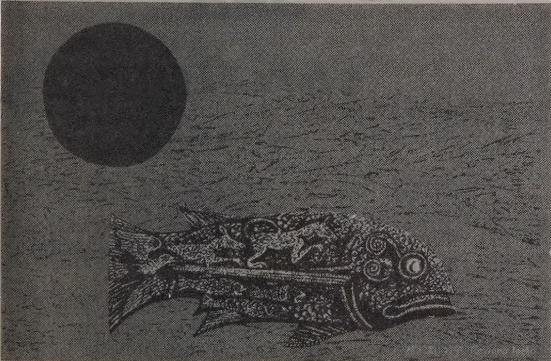
Some stone Jizo with a cross, built at the beginning of the 17th century, show Roman Catholic priests' robes even having "Kyrie" engraved on them. They were Christian expressions when the religion was officially prohibited, merging Christianity with Buddhism and civil religions. It was a symbolic way to express their faith and it is difficult for us to say their religious doctrine was not pure.

I believe that no pure religion has existed in history. It is not a simple matter to separate the usage of religion from pure religion. In the past, certain religions were advocated with political purposes. The nationalization of the Yasukuni Shinto Shrine is a typical example.

I find problems with Jizo statues on public property which are built by the city. Jizo should be maintained as generous expressions of people rather than as religious objects of the established religion.

KASAHARA Yoshimistu
Kyoto Seika Daigaku

(Translation/summary taken from
Asahi Shinbun, 9/29/1983.)



To live life together
Beyond shores
Beyond boundaries

THAI THEOLOGIAN VISITED JAPAN

Dr. Maen Pongudom, professor of church history at Thailand Theological Seminary and Payap College in Chiang Mai, Thailand, visited churches in Japan from Hokkaido to Izumo, Shimane prefecture from August 30 to September 20, 1983. He was sponsored by the Japan Ecumenical Mission Society and other friends in Japan. At the end of his trip, he shared his experiences and convictions with a group of people in Tokyo.

He preached in churches from his conviction that Buddhism and other Thai heritages are not "barriers," but rather important "vessels." In order to get Christ's message across to the Thai people, he emphasized that an understanding of mission should be rooted in one's own culture. The universal teaching of the Gospel should spell out its uniqueness and, at the same time, we have to know how our faith is historically linked with culture and tradition. He commented on his visit to a Catholic church in Osaka where the symbol of Mary has an oriental face while, in the same room, the figure of Christ has a Western face. He said that we have to understand faith in our own context and respond to issues which we face today.

Both Thailand and Japan have similar conditions in that they have had a long history of Buddhism and Christians are a minority in society. In both countries, mission was carried out by American missionaries preaching, healing and teaching where physical healing and intellectual development in Western-style education were immediate needs for the people. People's religious understands of salvation come through "one's own merits, intelligence and disciplinary efforts." Theology and mission cannot be separated. Theology must come out of the situation where the church is struggling. What churches face is individualism, departmentalism and institutionalism and we must find an ecclesiasticism which suits each situation. We cannot be negative to other faiths in our community, but need to establish a faith identity. #

HEADLINE MAKING EVENTS.....

The major newspaper Asahi Shinbun (9/28/1983) frontpage had two news items side by side: China's possible purchase of US arms and the establishment of Asia's Disarmament Committee" in the UN proposed by the Japan Socialist Party members who are visiting Beijing.

On September 20, headlines of the major newspapers were about the two-hour debate between Prime Minister NAKASONE Yasuhiro and new chairperson of the Japan Socialist Party, ISHIBASHI Masashi, regarding defense and national security questions.

Ishibashi criticized Nakasone's deterrence policy by explaining the importance of "unarmed neutrality" in the present world situation. Nakasone rebutted saying that unarmed neutrality would only encourage surrender of the nation.

Ishibashi's argument was:

1. The importance of national security is to find a way to prevent war. The idea of national defense based on military strength is not realistic in the nuclear age. It does not save people's lives, property nor secure necessary food for Japan.

2. Thus, it is necessary for us to build friendships with neighboring countries. Because relations with China are presently better our relationship with China is no longer tense.

3. We are not stressing the immediate abolishment of the Japan's Defense Forces and the Japan-US Security Treaty. We must start to improve our international relationship with the USSR. Ishibashi's stress was "unarmed neutrality" as the way for survival today.

Nakasone defended his position stating the importance of defense capabilities and criticising unarmed neutrality as too idealistic and unrealistic. His first priority is to increase the national defense budget before Ronald Reagan's visit to Japan. Nakasone defended the Self-Defense Forces and the

Japan-US Security arrangements through which he claimed the government has been able to maintain deterrence against any possible attack on Japan by foreign countries. Both leaders promised to continue the debate in the future.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.....

Peacemakers Film Festival

DATE: November 13, 1983

PLACE: Franciscan Chapel Center
2-37 Roppongi, 4-chome
Minato-ku, Tokyo

TIME: 1:30 - 5:30 PM

The PEACEMAKERS FILM FESTIVAL gives you an opportunity to view some of the most recent films, in English, produce dealing with the concern for peace building.

A multiple showing of eight films will make it possible for you to see several films depending on your interest. For additional information please call Betty Swain 0423-69-1942.

SEMINAR on

Ancestor Worship and Christianity

PLACE: Kansai Seminar House, Kyoto

TIME: October 28-29, 1983

Sponsored by: NCC CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS

c/o Kyoto Diocese of Japan Episcopal
Church (075-432-1945)

The seminar fee will be 13,000 yen of
which 3,000 yen should be sent by
October 20.

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